UNITED
NATIONS

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Economic and Social
Council

Distr.
GENERAL
E/CN.4/2001/NGO/84
2 February 2001

Original: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Fifty-seventh session
Item 14(b) of the provisional agenda

SPECIFIC GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS: MINORITIES

Written statement*/ submitted by All For Reparations and Emancipation, a non-governmental organization on the Roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[17 January 2001]

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*/ This written statement is issued, unedited, as received from the submitting non-governmental

During this 57th session of the Commission on Human Rights, Mr. Silis Muhammad will speak on behalf of so-called African-Americans for the ninth time. He has been bringing their collective prayer to the UN because the lingering effects of plantation slavery have left them in a deprived state. They are deprived of their original identity. They have experienced the forcible removal of culture, religion and 'mother tongue'. The annihilation of their 'mother tongue' is the extermination of their identity.

African-Americans in North, Central and South America and throughout the Diaspora all suffer from the loss of their identity. They did not come to the Americas willingly and they did not come as English speaking Christians with an Anglo-American culture. Neither did they come as Christians speaking Spanish or Portuguese or enjoying Spanish or Portuguese culture. Forcibly displaced from their common territory and scattered throughout the Americas Region and beyond, they have never questioned that they belong to each other as a group. Yet they have been denied the human rights that other groups enjoy: the right to speak their own language, practice their own religion and enjoy their own culture. Thus they are dispossessed of those human rights possessed by every minority and People and protected by the United Nations. They have not been in possession of their human rights for the past 400 years.

Although they are a People, and not a minority, African-Americans in the United States are placed within a minority status, as every scholar knows. The problems encountered in bringing the gravity of their position to light are extreme because the destruction of their identity has been hidden behind the U.S. Government's "melting pot" image. African-Americans mimic the identity of the majority. They are buried and hidden within the majority language, religion and culture, so very much so that United Nations in making its laws has left them out, it seems: it is not known immediately where they fit. To be left out of both the Declaration on the Rights of Minorities, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, is to not have political recognition of their human rights.

African-Americans support the notion that "Race" is a constituent element of the definition of minority. For more than 400 years they have been mindful, daily, of a consciousness of "otherness", with respect to racial differences. Unlike the Indigenous Peoples who were native to the territory, before colonization, and who formed many groups and spoke several languages, African-Americans were displaced from their common territory, and yet they invoke their similar characteristics in order to obtain their rights. Since the African-American "Racial" group is a group destroyed, it is axiomatic knowledge that they are a different racial group from the majority: they have neither racial dignity nor political bond.

Since collectively, they enjoy no political recognition, one might wonder how a complaint can be brought under international law. When they are able to argue about a violation of their human rights, and they should now be able in that they are racial members of the human family, this is their complaint: we are human beings, but to this date and time we are denied the human right of speaking our 'mother tongue' in violation

of Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which the United States of America has ratified.

Today the U.S. Government makes itself responsible for the rights of minorities within its jurisdiction to speak their 'mother tongue' in community with other members of their group. African-Americans cannot speak theirs. While the U.S. may assert that African-Americans are deprived of the use of their mother tongue, and not denied its use, scholars will agree that the very act of taking their 'mother tongue' away was for the express purpose of denying them the use of it. In fact, the act is tantamount to a permanent ongoing denial. Since their 'mother tongue' is taken away, they are both deprived and denied the use of it. And in its place, the U.S. continually has forced its Anglo-Saxon 'mother tongue' upon them for the past 400 years. Absent their 'mother tongue', they become a non-People, living without a permanent identity.

The African-American experience is an example for the civilized world of a holocaust wherein identity is forcibly and perpetually exterminated. Throughout their history, the U.S. Government, for the benefit of the white majority, perpetuated the crime by systematically obstructing their attempts to identify and bring dignity to themselves. The international community well understands that human dignity is attached to identity. African-Americans in the U.S. have cried out in many ways over many years for the restoration of their dignity as a people, yet their cry has been manipulated by the acts of the U.S. Government.

In the 1950s and '60s African-Americans by the hundreds of thousands joined and built the Lost-Found Nation of Islam, which was the most successful autonomy model for slave descendants in the U.S. During the same time period, the U.S. Government demonstrated its opposition to their rising consciousness in many ways, including its counter-intelligence program. Ultimately the U.S. Government used its media, its laws and its military to promote integration. As the international community knows, the integration and civil rights movement caused African-Americans to believe that they might one day achieve equality. Now they are beginning to understand that as long as they are forced to assume the identity of the ruling culture, they are placed in an underling position from which there is no escape.

Today the integration movement is viewed by experts as having brought about the demise of an independent Black economy and the weakening of the Black family and Black community. With their cohesiveness thus disrupted, the U.S. Government is now firmly in the position of being able to manipulate the African-American choice of leaders at the most crucial time in their rise.

There has never been a more grave situation for African-Americans and the United States of America. From the grass-root to the intellectual elite, they are coming into awareness that the U.S. Government has never intended or acted to do justice toward the descendants of its slaves. They are realizing that the lingering effects of slavery are intentionally placed to keep them in a permanent underling position. They are rising with this knowledge, and moving toward a mass cry for reparation. Concurrently, the potential for U.S. Government manipulation of African-Americans through media

appointed leaders is at its highest point. If the African-American people see their upward movement being turned against them once again, violent racial confrontation is assured.

Once again, Mr. Silis Muhammad is delivering to the Commission on Human Rights a recommendation on behalf of African-Americans. He asks for United Nations expert and technical assistance in the establishment of an inclusive forum of African-American leaders. This forum would serve as the decision making and negotiating body for African-Americans in their dealings with the U.S. Government. The forum would also serve as a model for African-Americans in the Americas and throughout the Diaspora. It would provide a protected environment wherein the gravity of the current situation can be examined and the extent of damages can be determined. Within such a forum Black leaders from the grass-root, the community organizations, religious organizations, professional organizations as well as scholars, business leaders and politicians, can discuss and conclude on the means of reparation most beneficial to the restoration of African-Americans individually and as a People.

In conclusion, United Nations intervention is urgently called for in the restoration of the human rights and collective political identity of African-Americans. UN intervention is urgently called for as well, to protect and assist African-American leaders within a forum, as they seek to determine the damage they have sustained and the means of reparation needed in order to bring them back to life as a People.